



FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How can local faith-based and community organizations participate in VA programs?

A: Volunteer and partnering opportunities are available throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs for faith-based and other community organizations -- at VA medical facilities and cemeteries, with VA's homeless veterans program, chaplain service, and in social work, research and home-based care -- to name just a few. For more information on these opportunities, contact your local Voluntary Service coordinator by visiting the [Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Web Site \(www.va.gov/volunteer\)](http://www.va.gov/volunteer) or by contacting the VA facility nearest you (<http://www.va.gov/directory>) and asking for "Voluntary Service."

For information on VA's homeless veterans program and to locate the homeless program coordinator in your area, visit Web site at www.va.gov/homeless.

Q: Where can I find information on what other federal agencies are doing?

A: You can find links to the participating agencies and federal grants they offer as well as other federal resources and the latest news on the faith-based and community initiative at <http://www.va.gov/opa/fbci/contact.htm>

Q: How do I find partnerships?

A: Different communities have different needs. That's why we encourage you to explore partnership opportunities at the Department of Veterans Affairs which has program offices and several pilots for which you can participate. You can also contact Veterans Service Organizations, the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS), Veterans County Services Offices, parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders to see where you can be of service.

Q: Do we need a 501C(3) in order to apply for a grant?

A: To apply for grants under VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, an organization is required to be a non-profit, state, local government agency, or Indian Tribal Government. Non-profit organizations must be recognized as either a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(19) by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

Q: What is the Compassion Capital Fund?

A: The Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) has been established to fund larger intermediary organizations across the country in their efforts to assist emerging faith-based and community groups expand their organizational capacities. The CCF awarded funds to approximately 10 new collaborations and 50 smaller organizations for this purpose in federal fiscal year 2004. Some of these "intermediaries" sub-grant money to smaller participating groups. More information on the CCF is available from the [Department of Health and Human Services \(www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccf\)](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccf).

Q: Is there one place where I can find information on all federal grants?

A: Review the White House grants catalog (www.WhiteHouse.gov/government/fbci/grants-catalog-index.html) for funding opportunities of particular interest to faith-based community organizations. Information can also be found at www.grants.gov and www.fedbizopps.gov. Also, you can find all federal grants in the General Services Administration's [Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance \(http://cfda.gov\)](http://cfda.gov). Faith-based and community groups are welcome to apply for any federal grants if they meet the prescribed guidelines.



Q: If there are few new sources of funds, how is a faith-based or community group supposed to get in the game?

A: The thrust of the program is to "level the playing field" so that all non-profit groups, including faith-based groups, are treated equitably and fairly. It is important to understand that faith-based and community groups are "competing" for federal or local grants and must have the know-how and the capacity to deliver the services or product for which the funding is intended.

Q: Is there a separate source of funds for faith-based and community initiatives?

A: There is no separate pot of money for the Faith-Based and Community Initiative. The key to the initiative is to provide information and guidance that will allow access for faith-based and community groups to apply for federal grants or grants.

Q: As a faith-based organization, will I be asked to sacrifice my religious character?

A: No. Your religious character may be a central part of your organization and the driving force behind your community service activities. Various regulations, including one that applies to VA's per diem and homeless providers grants, protect the religious independence of faith-based organizations that receive federal funds. For example, you do not need to remove religious symbols from the area in which federally funded activities are being conducted. However, direct federal funds cannot be used for inherently religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction or proselytizing. Also, you may not require a person to take part in religious activities in order to participate in your federally funded program. For more information on the final rule, go to our website at <http://www.va.gov/opa/fbc/docs/reg-guidance.pdf>.

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Commemorating 75 Years of Service

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs